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**REMARKS BY
U.S. AMBASSADOR MARCIA BERNICAT
AT BANGLADESH DEMOGRAPHIC HEALTH SURVEY**

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Assalamu Aleikum, Nomoshkar, and Good Afternoon.

I am pleased to be here with you today to learn about the findings from the 2014 Bangladesh Demographic Health Survey.

Completing a world-class survey like the Bangladesh DHS is a rigorous task. I would like to congratulate NIPORT for their tremendous coordination of the 2014 Bangladesh DHS process, Mitra and Associates for their exceptional field work in conducting the survey, and ICF International and USAID for their excellent technical expertise and leadership throughout all stages of the survey. All of you have done an impressive job in producing a high-quality report and presentation within just five months of completing survey fieldwork.

While I have only been in Bangladesh for a short time, I am fully aware of the excitement and anticipation that surrounds the Bangladesh DHS survey. I hope that we can all fully use this data not only to measure progress, but to use as a roadmap as we continue the efforts to improve the health of Bangladeshis all across the country.

Bangladesh has made great strides in ensuring quality and equitable healthcare for all citizens. The results of the 2014 BDHS illustrate this commitment and shows that Bangladesh is continuing to make significant progress towards achieving this goal. One accomplishment that particularly stands out for me is that the BDHS confirms that Bangladesh has reached its Millennium Development Goal 4 target for reducing child mortality and reached it ahead of schedule. I am also encouraged to see that childhood nutrition is improving, many more women are giving birth under the care of a skilled attendant, the disparity in healthcare use between young boys and girls no longer exists, and the gap between the poor and rich in obtaining maternal health services is declining. These are major achievements and we applaud all those who have contributed to this success.

However, the BDHS findings also reveal some issues of concern. Contraceptive use has not increased much in the last decade, the fertility level has not changed in the last three years, and the incidence of teenage childbirth remains disturbingly high. We have also learned from the recent Bangladesh Health Facility Survey results that the overall quality of care needs considerable improvement across all types of health facilities.

While these and other challenges exist, Bangladesh is a shining example in its track record of consistently using data to identify its challenges, develop strategies, and monitor performance. In fact, an article published in *The Lancet* has pointed out that Bangladesh's evidence-based decision-making has played a significant role in the country's progress in improving the health and well-being of its people. I am certain that the Government of Bangladesh, in collaboration with all development partners, will continue to make remarkable progress in improving the health of its people. This is something that the U.S. Government remains committed to, and we look forward to continuing this important work together.

Before I close, I must say that this is an exciting month for data lovers and for everyone who is interested in the subject of public health in Bangladesh. Today, you have been presented with a bag holding three treasures: the preliminary results of the 2014 Bangladesh DHS, as well as the 2014 Bangladesh Health Facility survey and the final report of the 2013 Urban Health Survey. The U.S. Government is proud to be associated with the implementation of all three surveys.

This wealth of information has come at a key juncture, as discussions about the next Bangladesh health sector program have begun and as Bangladesh is formulating its Seventh Five-Year Plan. The information in the BDHS is hugely valuable, but the value of this information depends on how it is used. I encourage you all to pour over this data, think about it, and analyze it. And translate it into new and bolder commitments to improve health in this country.

I think we can all agree that all Bangladeshis – whether old or young, rich or poor, male or female; living in cities, towns and villages across the country – want and deserve to have the basic health services they need to lead healthy, happy and prosperous lives. The Bangladesh DHS is an excellent tool to help in achieving this goal.

Thank you very much.

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**As prepared for delivery*